book identifies Easter Term as starting the eighteenth day after Easter and ending the Monday after the Ascension. Trinity Term began the Friday after Trinity Sunday and ended June 28. Michaelmas Term began October 9 or 10 and ended November 28 or 29. Hillary Term began January 23 or 24 and ended February 12 or 13. During term time, the court did not sit on Sundays or on the feasts of the Ascension, John the Baptist, All Saints, or the Purification of Mary.

Dramatic performances and the liturgical year

Dramatic performances were often scheduled to coincide with certain church seasons or feasts. This practice was not new to the English Renaissance, however. The medieval mystery plays serve as a prime example of the long-standing connection between theater, religion, and holy days, and if the tradition of lively performances at the more festive times of the year continued in England under Elizabeth, it could be considered as much a continuation of Catholic tradition as a uniquely early modern or Reformation phenomenon.

Elizabethan and Jacobean court records do, however, reveal a large number of masques performed in connection with various feasts, particularly with Twelfth Night/Epiphany and Shrovetide. Whether the content of those masques had a direct correlation with the religious meanings of the liturgical seasons is doubtful; even

such an overt liturgical allusion as Shakespeare provides in the title *Twelfth Night* was certainly not a reference to the religious nature of the feast, or even to a performance date, but to the atmosphere of frivolous chaos that had developed over the years. It is far more likely that the timing of these performances was based on ecclesiastical rules regarding secular entertainment during certain seasons of the year. The penitential seasons of Advent and Lent, for example, were inappropriate for theatrical amusements.

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92. Judaism and Jews

Brett D. Hirsch

Attitudes toward judaism and Jews in Shakespeare's England were complex and contradictory. For the original audiences of *The Merchant of Venice*, Shylock's announcement "I am a Jew" (*MV* 3.1.46) was more than a statement of religious affiliation. The word "Jew" itself – whether employed as noun, adjective, or verb – was informed by a web of shifting cultural, social, theological, and political associations. The Jews were held to be God's chosen people, keepers of the Hebrew language and exegetical traditions essential to a comprehensive understanding of Christian Scripture, and a nation destined to convert to Christianity and thereby herald the Second Coming of Christ. The Jews could boast eminent scholars, trusted court physicians, and state administrators among their number, as well as wealthy merchants whose international networks mediated commerce and trade between various states in Christian Europe and the Ottoman Empire.

At the same time, Christian authorities from the New Testament onward maintained that the Jews were not only

in league with the devil but were his descendants. Belief in this diabolical kinship explained many of the demonic physical characteristics and behaviors attributed to them. Medieval and early modern Christian literature, art, and popular culture frequently depicted Jews as physically abject and distinct, with large hooked noses, red or dark curly hair, goatlike beards, and dark skin and features, through to more monstrous attributes such as cranial horns, prehensile tails, a foul sulfurous stench, and menstruation in men. Actual Jewish practices such as male genital circumcision reinforced the belief in an embodied Jewish difference. Jews were also perceived as socially aberrant, as evidenced by frequent accusations of the kidnap and crucifixion of Christian children in mockery of Christ's Passion, the ritual use of Christian blood, the poisoning of wells and spread of infectious disease, the desecration of the Eucharistic Host, acts of cannibalism and sorcery, and the financial exploitation of Christians through coin clipping and usury.

JEWS AS POLARIZERS

Since the figure of the Jew carried so much symbolic potential in late medieval and early modern England, it is unsurprising that other social, political, and religious groups either aligned themselves with or maligned others as Jews or "judaizers." On the one hand, Orthodox and unorthodox Christian groups on all sides of the confessional divide were derided by one another in terms of Judaic recidivism. On the other hand, Calvinists and other Protestant minorities identified with the Jews via the notion of divine election and a shared experience of persecution and survival in diaspora. English xenophobia also frequently expressed the economic and political threats posed by aliens such as the Spanish, Portuguese, French, Dutch, and even the Ottoman Turks, in Jewish terms.

Thus the Jew – real, imagined, symbolic – was simultaneously a figure of intense fascination and fear, and this uneasy dynamic of attraction and repulsion was regularly played out on the stage and page and from the pulpit. These competing and contradictory impulses, informed by centuries of anti-Semitic and philo-Semitic narratives, shaped English attitudes toward the Jews before and after their wholesale expulsion from England in 1290. In order to better understand the complexities of Shakespeare's representation of Jews and those of his contemporaries, as well as the rich and varied preconceptions of their original audiences and readers, it is necessary to trace the origin, transmission, and adaptation of these narratives through late medieval and early modern English literature, drama, art, and popular culture.

JEWS AND USURY

Jews migrated to England in substantial numbers after the Norman Conquest of 1066, and in many ways the experience of medieval English Jewry was no different from that of their brethren in other parts of Christendom. Theirs was a life dogged by state- and church-sponsored sanctions, popular suspicion and hostility, and social and economic restrictions designed to humiliate and alienate, culminating with their wholesale expulsion by Edward I in 1290.

Medieval English Jews were property of the Crown, and although this special status afforded them royal protection, it effectively rendered them resident aliens whose rights and obligations were subject to the whims of the monarch. Restrictions were placed on Jewish ownership of land, and Christian fear of competition resulted in the exclusion of Jews from the merchant and craft guilds. Unable to practice crafts, manufacture goods, or sell either in shops or the marketplace, Jews were compelled to pursue less desirable economic activities.

Moneylending was a particularly attractive option following the decrees of the Third Lateran Council (1179), which expressly forbade Christians from practicing usury under threat of excommunication and provided an important economic niche for the Jews to fill. Englishmen of all social ranks, from commoners to members of the court and clergy to the monarch himself, relied on Jewish loans to finance their ventures, from buying land and building churches to waging war and fighting in the Crusades. Increasingly, a system of credit became essential to support the economic expansion of the age, and so the Jewish practice of usury was tolerated as a necessary evil. Usury was a profitable enterprise for medieval English Jews, but financial prosperity came at the cost of growing resentment and vilification by their Christian dependents, culminating in outbreaks of violence and hostility.

Despite the fact that Christians also practiced moneylending, usury was understood as a peculiarly Jewish crime, with the terms "Jew" and "usurer" rendered synonymous. So strong was this association in England that it survived the expulsion of the Jews and the subsequent relaxing of restrictions against the Christian practice of usury, made necessary by Jewish absence. In *A Discourse vppon vsurye* (1572), Thomas Wilson reminded his readers that usury was the reason Jews "were hated in England, and so banyshed worthelye," and called for Christian usurers (termed "Englishemen ... worse then Jewes") to be similarly expelled (Wilson sig. F5v).

Since Jews and usurers were rendered one and the same in the English imagination, the iconography of both figures was similarly shared. For example, the wolf, a traditional symbol of avarice, frequently became aligned with Jews and usurers alike. Echoes of this association appear in *The Merchant of Venice*, where Shylock is compared to a "wolf" (*MV* 4.1.73) with "wolfish, bloody, starved, and ravenous" (*MV* 4.1.138) desires on Antonio, the "tainted wether of the flock" (*MV* 4.1.114). As well as a wolf, Shakespeare's repeated characterization of Shylock as a dog (*MV* 1.3.103, *MV* 2.8.14, *MV* 3.3.6, *MV* 3.3.7, *MV* 3.3.18, *MV* 4.1.129, *MV* 4.1.133, *MV* 4.1.287) throughout the play resonates with early modern English debates about usury, in which the practice was frequently likened to bestiality, cannibalism, and unnatural breeding. The Hebrew word for usury, נשׁך (*neshek̲*), is derived from the root word meaning "to bite," and this etymology was known to early modern English commentators such as Henry Smith, who reminded his readers that usury "hath her name of byting, and she may wel signifie byting: for many haue not onely bene bitten by it, but deuoured by it, that is, consumed all that they haue" (Smith sig. A6v). Through "biting" interest and "eating" debts, usurers (and therefore Jews) fed on the livelihood of good Christians. In *The Merchant of Venice*, these fears are given a chilling literalism through repeated allusions to Shylock's feeding on Christian flesh (*MV* 1.3.38–39, *MV* 1.3.52, *MV* 1.3.158–60, *MV* 2.5.14–15, *MV* 3.1.42–43).

OTHER "JEWISH" CRIMES

Like usury, offenses against the coins of the realm were similarly understood as peculiarly Jewish crimes. These

offenses included "clipping" (cutting slivers off coins), "washing" (sweating coins in acid), and "rounding" or "filing" (filing down the edges of coins), the results of which were melted into bullion or forged into counterfeit coins, and the debased currency was put back into circulation. Although Christians were also accused of clipping coins, as the chief owners of currency in medieval England it was tempting for the Jews to indulge disproportionately in this form of unjust enrichment. The most significant episode of Jewish coin clipping occurred in 1278, when Edward I ordered a house-to-house search of Jewish homes across the country. Over 600 Jews were arrested, the majority imprisoned in the Tower of London, with roughly a third of that number subsequently tried, convicted, and hanged for offenses against the king's coin the following year.

The debasement of English currency was a perennial concern of the Crown after the expulsion of the Jews, with the offenses made high treason by an Act of Parliament under Henry V (3 Hen. V. c. 6). When Mary Tudor issued her general Act of Repeal (1 Mar. sess. 1. c. 1), the harsh penalties for these offenses were abrogated. Concerns about the debasement of English currency resurfaced during the reign of Elizabeth I, who issued *An Acte agaynst the clyppyng, washyng, roundyng, or fylyng of Coynes* (5 Eliz. c. 11) in 1563, which made "Clyppyng, washyng, roundyng, or fylyng, for wicked lucre, or gaynes sake, of any [of] the proper moneys or coynes of this Realme, or the dominions therof" an act of treason. Chroniclers of the time were keen to remind readers of the earlier Jewish precedents of the crime. For instance, Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles* related how the "monie and coine" of the realm "was fowlie clipped, washed, and counterfeited by those naughtie men the Iewes" (Holinshed 6: 279). "Well into the seventeenth century," whether through usury or offenses against the coin of the realm, "Jews continued to be identified with crimes that threatened the economic health of the nation" (Shapiro 100), and opponents of Jewish readmission to England could readily draw on these fears to support their arguments.

Ways to know a Jew

The Crown and the guilds imposed strict economic controls, but successive ecclesiastical sanctions further restricted the social lives of medieval English Jews. Following the Third Lateran Council of 1179, Jews could not employ Christian servants or give evidence against Christians. England was also the first country in Europe to vigorously enforce the wearing of the Jew Badge to visibly distinguish Jews from Christians, only three years after the Fourth Lateran Council had prescribed it in 1215 amid concerns about miscegenation and purity:

> Whereas in certain provinces of the Church the difference in their clothes sets the Jews and Saracens apart from the Christians, in certain other lands there has

arisen such confusion that no differences are noticeable. Thus it sometimes happens that by mistake Christians have intercourse with Jewish or Saracen women, and Jews or Saracens with Christian women. Therefore … we decree that these people of either sex, and in all Christian lands, and at all times, shall be easily distinguishable from the rest of the population by the quality of their clothes.

<div align="right">(qtd. in Grayzel 308–09)</div>

The precise shape, size, and color of the Jew Badge varied from country to country. In medieval England, it took the form of strips of white linen or parchment to represent the Mosaic Tablets of the Law, whereas a yellow circle was the most common form of the Badge elsewhere in Europe. Jews were later required to wear distinctive horned hats (*pileum cornutum*) following the Council of Vienna in 1267, which, like the Jew Badge, "was enforced earlier and more consistently in England than in any other country of Europe" (Roth 95). Shakespeare alludes to this legislation in *The Merchant of Venice*, where Shylock refers to his "Jewish gaberdine" (*MV* 1.3.104) and "the badge of all our tribe" (*MV* 1.3.102).

As laws were put in place to ensure that Jews could be readily identified through distinctive clothing and badges throughout Christian lands, works of literature, art, and popular culture reinforced the notion that the Jews were otherwise physically abject and unmistakable. Jews were frequently depicted in medieval art with large hooked noses, red or dark curly hair, goatlike beards, and darker skin and features than Christians. See for example Figure 141, a drawing from a fourteenth-century English manuscript showing the persecution of three Jews. The Gospel of John maintained that the Jews were descended from the devil (John 8.44), and medieval textual and visual representations routinely associated the Jews with the demonic, attributed with such fiendish attributes as cranial horns, prehensile tails, and a foul stench (*foetor judaicus*).

The belief that Jews were horned, visually reinforced by the horned Jewish hat they were required to wear, may have also derived from the common iconographic representation

141. The persecution of English Jews. Marginal drawing in *Chronica Roffense*, Rochester, early fourteenth century. British Library MS Cotton Nero D. II, fol. 183v. © The British Library Board.

of Moses with horns. The Hebrew text of Exodus 34.29 describing Moses' descent from Mount Sinai with the Tablets of the Law is פניו עור קרן כי (*ki qaran 'or panav*, "the skin of his face sent forth beams [of light]"). The Hebrew root קרן (*q-r-n*) may be translated as "shine" (*qaran*, a verb) or "horn" (*qeren*, a noun). In the Vulgate, the Hebrew verb of the Exodus text was mistaken for the noun and mistranslated as *cornuta* ("horns"). Many instances of the horned Moses iconographic motif appear in medieval English manuscript illuminations, stained glass, and sculpture, such as the twelfth-century statue of Moses from St. Mary's Abbey in York.

The belief that Jews emitted a noxious scent (the *foetor judaicus*), in contrast to the aromatic odor of sanctity emanating from the saintly Christian body, and that Jewish men menstruated, reinforced popular anti-Semitic narratives linking the Jews to excrement and filth, plague and disease, and poison. One particularly famous example is the tale of the Jew of Tewkesbury, an event reported to have occurred in 1257 but frequently retold up to Shakespeare's day. According to John Foxe's account in *Actes and Monuments*,

> A certain Jew … fell into a priuy at Tewkesbury vpon a sabboth day, which for the great reuerence he had to his holy sabboth, would not suffer him selfe to be plucked out. And so Lord Richard Earle of Glocester, hearing therof, would not suffer him to be drawne out on Sundaye for reuerence of the holy day. And thus the wretched superstitious Jewe remayning there tyll monday, was found dead in the doung.
>
> (Foxe, *Actes* sig. N1v)

The notion of the "excremental" Jew persisted long into seventeenth-century England, when belief in the *foetor judaicus* was evidently widespread enough for Thomas Browne to devote an entire chapter to refuting the charge that "the Jews stinck naturally" in his *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646). Similarly, as Jonathan Gil Harris has insightfully shown, there is much literary, dramatic, and anecdotal material linking the fear of Jewish infiltration of the Christian body politic with enemas and sodomy. In Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, for example, Barabas betrays the Christian city of Malta by "gain[ing] entry to the body politic through apertures that are subtly coded as its anus" and leading the Ottoman troops through the sewers (Harris 80).

According to medieval and early modern medical knowledge, miasmas or harmful vapors were understood to be the principal cause of epidemic diseases such as plague, capable of contaminating both persons and objects. In Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*, for example, Zadoch boasts that his Jewish "breath stinkes so alreadie, that it is within halfe a degree of poyson" and were he "crusht to death … there might be quintessenst out of me one quart of precious poyson," and if he were to cut off his ulcerous leg "from his fount of corruption" he

might "extract a venome worse than anie serpents" (Nashe sig. N1r). The Jews were so routinely accused of spreading plague by poisoning Christian wells throughout medieval Europe that "by the sixteenth century the idea that Jews tried to poison Christians was proverbial" (Shapiro 96). Thus, in John Marston's *The Malcontent*, when Mendoza asks, "Canst thou impoyson? canst thou impoyson?" Malevole replies "Excellently, no Iew, Potecary, or Polititian better" (Marston sig. H1r).

Even the Black Death that devastated Europe and Asia in the fourteenth century was blamed on the Jews. Edward Fenton's *Certaine Secrete wonders of Nature*, adapted from the original French of Pierre Boaistuau, described how the Jews were

> "determined and fully resolued amongst them selues, to extirp at one instant the name of Christians, destroying them all by poyson" prepared as "an oyntment, with a confection of the blood of mans vrine composed with certaine venemous herbes," which "they nightly cast … into all the fountaines and welles of the Christians. Whervpon this corruption engendred such contagious diseases in all *Europe*, that there died wel nigh the thirde person throughout the same."
>
> (Fenton fol. 27r–v)

The accompanying woodcut depicts a Jew casting a bag of poison into a well, into which a statue of a devil is urinating, next to the mutilated body of a crucified child.

Jewish doctors

The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) expressly forbade medical practitioners from attending to the sick without Church approval, yet numerous instances of Jewish doctors in the service of medieval and early modern popes, bishops, monarchs, and courtiers across Europe suggest that this injunction was not strictly enforced. Jewish doctors were thought to be particularly adept at doing away with their Gentile patients by poisoning, a belief routinely featured in early modern English literature and drama. Barabas claims to have "studied Physicke" and to "poyson wells" in Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* (Marlowe sig. E2r) before he proceeds to poison the nuns of Malta onstage. In Nashe's *Unfortunate Traveller*, Doctor Zacharie's botched attempt to poison the pope's concubine results in banishment of all the Jews from Rome. Robert Greene's *Selimus* (1594) and Thomas Goffe's *The Raging Turk* (1631), two Turk plays of the period that dramatize the same series of historical events, stage the poisoning of the Turkish emperor Bajazet by his Jewish doctor.

While fictional works portrayed Jewish doctors poisoning their clients across continental Europe and the Ottoman Empire, the sensational trial of Roderigo Lopez in 1594 brought the reality closer to home. The chronicler William Camden, writing of the event some three decades later, recounted that Lopez, personal physician

to Elizabeth I and "a Iewish Sectary," was convicted along with other "*Portugalls*" (Portuguese) of having "conspired to make away the Queene by poyson" for "50 000 Crownes" from the king of Spain. At his execution, Lopez reportedly confessed "that he loued the *Queene* as well as *Christ Iesus*; which being spoken by a Iew, as it was, was but onely laughed at by the people" (Camden 103–05).

Whether Camden's report is historically accurate or not, contemporary commentators made much of Lopez's Judaism – past and present – despite his outward profession of Christianity. The Admiral's Men revived *The Jew of Malta* to capitalize on the sensational trial, and Nashe's *Unfortunate Traveller*, with its vicious portrayal of Doctor Zacharie, was similarly published the same year. It has been argued that in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, reference to "a wolf … hanged for human slaughter" (*MV* 4.1.134) is possibly an allusion to the Lopez affair. Although such an allusion is possible, based on the wordplay of Lopez/*lupus* ("wolf"), more convincing explanations draw on the wolf as a symbol of Jewish avarice and usury, the medieval and early modern criminal prosecution and execution of animals, and the contemporary practice of hanging Jews alongside dogs, wolves, and other animals elsewhere in Europe.

More direct representations followed in the wake of Jacobean nostalgia for Elizabeth I. In Thomas Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon* (1607), Lopez appears in the character of "*Ropus* a Doctor of Physicke," otherwise called "Lupus" throughout the play text. Although otherwise silent about his Jewish origins, the play's description of Lopez as a traitor who "smels" and "stinckes" with a "diseas'd" soul (Dekker sig. H1v) certainly resonates with the popular belief in the *foetor judaicus*. Likewise, the image of the "excremental" Jew is promoted by the derisive reference to Lopez as a "Glister-pipe" (ibid.), the implement used to administer enemas.

A detailed account of the Lopez plot appears alongside other failed attempts on Queen Elizabeth's life in George Carleton's *A Thankfvll Remembrance of Gods Mercy*, originally published in 1624. The enlarged third edition of 1627 featured custom engravings, one of which shows Lopez "compounding to poyson the Queene" (Carleton 164), playing on the word for the preparation of poison and the fee demanded by Lopez as he asks his Spanish interlocutor, "*Quid dabitis*" ("What will you give?"). In the bottom right of the panel, Lopez is shown hanging from the gallows with the inscription "*Proditorum finis funis*" ("The end of traitors is the rope"). (See Figure 142.)

The Carleton engravings were adapted for use in a later seventeenth-century broadside, *Popish Plots and Treasons … Illustrated with Emblems and explain'd in Verse*. The verse accompanying the Lopez engraving emphasized his Jewish identity by reference to Judas, the archetypal Jewish traitor, and drew on a web of negative associations between Jews and the devil, the pope, doctors, and poison:
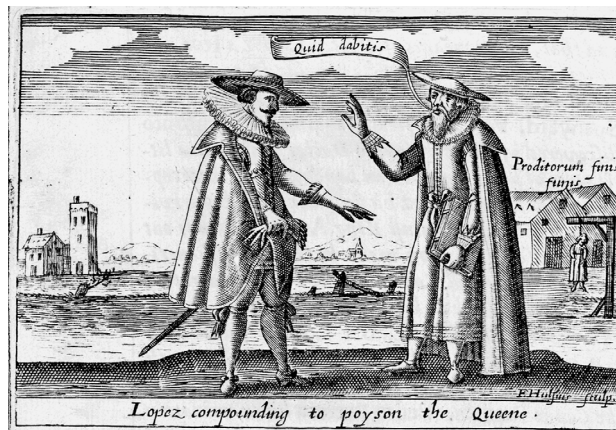
142. Lopez compounding to poyson the Queene. Illustration from George Carleton, *A Thankfull Remembrance of Gods Mercy* (London: 1627), p. 164. © Trustees of the British Museum.

But now a private horrid Treason view
Hatcht by the Pope, the Devil, and a Jew;
Lopez a Doctor must by Poison do
What all their Plots have fail'd in hitherto:
What will you give me then, the *Judas* Cries;
Full *fifty thousand Crowns*, t'other replies.
Tis done – but hold, the wretch shall miss his hope,
The Treasons known, and his Reward's the Rope.
                    (Carleton *Popish Plots*.)

Demonic rituals

In addition to charges of poisoning, the Jews of Europe were routinely accused of the desecration of the Eucharistic Host, the ritual murder of Christian children, and the use of Christian blood for ritual purposes. When the body of a twelve-year-old apprentice leatherworker named William was found in a wood near Norwich on the Eve of Easter in 1144, the local Jewish community was accused of his torture and murder. It was alleged that the Jews, following a synagogue service on the second day of Passover, lured the boy into the woods in order to crucify him. This was the first documented case of what has come to be referred to as the ritual murder accusation – the belief that the Jews annually crucified a Christian boy as a ritual sacrifice in mockery of Christ's Passion – over a quarter of a century before similar charges were recorded elsewhere in Europe. Further English allegations were recorded at Gloucester (1168), Bury St. Edmunds (1181), Bristol (1183), Winchester (1191), and London (1244).

The most famous English ritual murder case occurred in 1255, when the body of a young Christian boy was found in a well in Lincoln. Subsequent legends about the martyrdom of Little St. Hugh of Lincoln served as a source for Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, in which the prioress describes the capture, torture, and brutal murder of a young clergion by the Jews as he walks home. Like William

of Norwich and Little St. Hugh of Lincoln, the alleged victims of ritual murder were venerated as saints and martyrs until the Reformation, and stories of their martyrdom were retold and adapted in popular ballads, chronicles, and martyrologies, and depicted in stained glass, painted rood screens, and other decorations in churches and cathedrals across England. By the sixteenth century, belief that the Jews crucified Christian children was widespread and proverbial, as evidenced by the flippancy of Friar Jacomo's remark about Barabas in Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*: "What ha[s] he crucified a child?" (Marlowe sig. G2r).

Later adaptations of these allegations took on additional implications of cruelty and depravity, combining the traditional charge of ritual murder with what has come to be known as the Blood Libel – the accusation that the Jews procured Christian blood for ritual purposes, medicine, and magic. The first recorded accusation took place in 1235 when the Jews of the German town of Fulda were accused of killing five Christian boys and drawing their blood *ad suum remedium* ("for remedial use"). Later accusations on the Continent were even more sensational, such as the abduction, forced circumcision, bloodletting, and ritual murder of Simon of Trent in 1475.

News of these Blood Libel legends soon reached England and tainted the memory of the child martyrs. For example, a fifteenth-century painted rood screen in Holy Trinity Church, Loddon, Norfolk, depicts the bloodletting of William of Norwich by the Jews as they crucify him – an aspect completely absent in earlier accounts of his martyrdom. (See Figure 143.) The Blood Libel narratives also reinforced the perception of the Jews as cannibals, feasting figuratively on Christian finances through usury and literally on the blood of Christian children. Early modern echoes of the cannibalism charge are found in the repeated allusions to Shylock's feeding on Christian flesh in *The Merchant of Venice* (*MV* 1.3.38–39, *MV* 1.3.52, *MV* 1.3.158–60, *MV* 2.5.14–15, *MV* 3.1.42–43) and, more explicitly, in *The Trauailes of the Three English Brothers*, in which Zariph the Jew prays that Sir Anthony Sherley will default on his payment, since "the sweetest part / Of a *Iewes* feast, is a Christians heart" (Day, Rowley, and Wilkins sig. F1v).

SORCERY

The Blood Libel and ritual murder accusations drew on and fused with earlier associations between the Jews and sorcery. Readers of the Old Testament knew that Moses and Aaron had freed the Israelites by besting the Egyptian sorcerers, and Joseph was adept at interpreting dreams – a service that Jews were known to sell in Roman times, as the epithet *qualiacunque voles Iudaei somnia vendunt* ("The Jew will readily sell you any dream") in Juvenal's *Satires* makes clear. The medieval belief that the Jews were in league with the devil explained their perceived magical abilities and equated Jewish ritual with demonic magic in the popular Christian mind.

143. A fifteenth-century painted rood screen depicting the ritual murder of St. William of Norwich. Holy Trinity Church, Loddon, Norfolk. Photograph courtesy of Dr. Katherine J. Lewis, University of Huddersfield.

In 1189, a delegation of English Jews bearing gifts was barred from admission to the coronation of Richard I, amid fears that they intended to harm the monarch by sorcery and the evil eye. A crowd that had been aroused by their unwelcome presence beat several members of the delegation to death, and further outbreaks of violence broke out across the country as exaggerated rumors of the incident spread. Belief that Jews were capable of conjuring and conversing with demons found expression in many variations of the proto-Faustian Theophilus legend, in which the monk Theophilus is induced by a Jewish sorcerer to exchange his soul for favors from the devil. Moreover, "the Hebrew language, the tongue in which the sacred Scriptures were written, had achieved the status of an especially effective magical medium in ancient times" (Trachtenberg 61) and by the seventeenth century was considered essential for Christian practitioners of natural philosophy, alchemy, and other occult sciences. The use of Hebrew inscriptions on amulet charms, prepared and owned by medieval and early modern Christians, further attests to the perceived efficacy of the language for magic.

Blood Libel narratives often suggested that Jews obtained Christian blood to anoint the bodies of their dead, in the vain hope of redemption by proxy should Christ turn out to be the Messiah. Other charges similarly maligned the Jews as perfidious in their outward rejection of Christianity by pointing to acts that betrayed

their acknowledgment of Christian truth. Jews were frequently accused of illicitly obtaining and torturing the Eucharistic Host, simultaneously reenacting the Passion and betraying belief in the Christian doctrine of transubstantiation.

Likewise, charges that the Jews profaned icons and relics revealed Jewish recognition of the Catholic doctrine of intercession and the saints themselves. Narratives detailing Jewish desecration of the Host and abuse of icons and relics were widespread throughout medieval Europe, promulgated in sermon *exempla*, popular ballads, and religious drama, and frequently depicted in manuscript illuminations and in stained glass in churches and cathedrals. Perhaps the most famous English example of the Host desecration narrative is the fifteenth-century Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*, in which Jonathas and his motley crew of fellow Jews subject the Host to a variety of different tortures – so outlandish that Jonathas manages to sever his hand in the process – before burning it in an oven, in which it explodes to reveal the transubstantiated Christ. The play concludes with the miraculous restoration of Jonathas's hand and the baptism of the repentant Jews, who then embark on a penitential voyage.

Figurative and former, covert and current Jews

Long after they were expelled from England in 1290, medieval narratives about the Jews continued to be circulated and adapted into different media, ensuring that early modern authors such as Shakespeare and his contemporaries could draw on and engage with this rich cultural legacy. Developments in England and abroad provoked renewed interest in the Jews, who, although they remained figures largely from narrative and fantasy rather than experience, continued to play a role in the ongoing projects of building an English national identity and negotiating Christian identity in the face of different cultures and civilizations.

Reformation polemics on all sides of the confessional divide were ruthless in their attempts to denigrate the beliefs and vilify the personalities of one another. Among these heated exchanges, the charge of "judaizing" was singularly popular, simultaneously an accusation of Judaic recidivism and an invocation of the myriad negative associations of the Jews. The rituals and ceremonies of the Catholic Church were cited as evidence of judaizing by the Reformers, to whom the pope was not simply a monster – reinforced by numerous popular woodcuts and broadsides – but the head of the "Synagogue of Satan." The sheer number of treatises against the ceremonies of the "Romish Synagogue" and the rituals of the "Synagogue of Satan" printed in early modern England testifies to the lasting popularity and utility of the label. Catholic commentators derided the scriptural literalism of the Calvinists and the Lutheran liturgy as equally Judaic, just as the various Protestant minority groups that emerged during the

sixteenth century were quick to tarnish their rivals with the same stigma of Jewishness. In short, the charge of judaizing was a convenient and popular epithet that could be (and was) leveled at anyone, regardless of creed.

In much the same way that English Protestants stigmatized Catholic pomp and ceremony as a regression to Judaism, the charge of judaizing also formed part of the polemic of denunciation of those Protestant minorities seeking further reform of the English Church. Branded as Precisians and Sabbatarians, these various groups were collectively conflated as Puritans and maligned by virtue of the perceived Jewish tendencies they shared – the privileging of Old Testament values and espousing the literal interpretation of scripture. Unsurprisingly, these Puritans were frequently stigmatized as Jews on the early modern stage. In addition to their hypocrisy, religious fervor, and snobbery, stage Puritans were mocked for their subscription to Jewish beliefs and practices, such as abstaining from pork or observing the Jewish Sabbath. Examples include "Rabbi" Zeal-of-the-Land Busy in Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, first performed in 1614, or the Puritan figure appearing as part of the "anticke round of dancers" in Robert Davenport's *A New Tricke to Cheat the Divell*, who announces "I am a Puritan … one that will eate no Porke, / Doth use to shut his shop on Saterdayes, / … A Iewish Christian, and a Christian *Iew*" (Davenport sig. F4v).

Christian polemics conflated the Jews with other "enemies of Christ," commonly resulting in the elision of distinctions between Jews and Muslims, pagans, and heretics in medieval and early modern English writing. Jessica is described as "Most beautiful pagan, most sweet Jew" (*MV* 2.3.10–11) and an "infidel" (*MV* 3.2.217) in *The Merchant of Venice*. In Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, Barabas is described as "An Infidell" (Marlowe sig. G4v), and an extortionate tribute is exacted from him and his fellow Jews "like infidels" (sig. C1r). The conflation between Jews and Muslims – Turks, Saracens, or Moors – was particularly commonplace in the drama of the period. Jewish characters frequently swear by "Mahounde" – a pejorative corruption of the name of the Islamic prophet – in the surviving medieval liturgical dramas and mystery cycles. For example, Jewish characters repeatedly pray to "Machomet" throughout the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*, and Herod variously swears to "Mahounde" in the York and Towneley cycles and the Digby plays. This confusion of Jew and Muslim survived into the early modern drama, evidenced by Robert Wilson's *The Three Ladies of London* (1584), in which the Jewish usurer Gerontus swears "by mightie Mahomet" (R. Wilson sig. E3r).

Aliens

Economic threats, whether posed by foreign Christian merchants or native English usurers, were routinely described in terms that drew on the long tradition of

association between the Jews and usury and financial ruin. In the last decade of the reign of Elizabeth I, unemployed laborers and returning soldiers –"masterless men and vagabonds" – flocked to the capital in startling numbers in search of food, work, or relief. This influx strained existing civic institutions and infrastructure, and popular frustration was directed toward London's immigrant communities.

Anti-alien feelings were exacerbated in 1593 when, after a bill proposed to prohibit aliens – then predominantly composed of Protestant exiles from France and the Low Countries – from engaging in retail trade failed to pass through Parliament, merchants in London responded by issuing a series of broadsides threatening foreign artisans with violence unless they left England. One such broadside was affixed to the wall of a Dutch church. Among the litany of charges leveled at the "strangers that doe inhabite in this lande," the "Dutch Church Libel" maligned London's resident aliens as nefarious Jews who threatened the welfare of the English state – "Your vsery doth leave vs all for deade … / And like the Jewes, you eate us vp as bread" (qtd. in Freeman) – terms resonating "with the discourse of host desecration on the one hand and, on the other, the cannibalism associated with Jews in late sixteenth-century discussions of usury" (Shapiro 185). Likewise, English Christians who engaged in the "Lazie Trade" of usury were commonly derided as Jews who, according to Francis Bacon, should have been made to wear "Orange-tawney Bonnets" to visually identify them as such since "they doe *Iudaize*" (Bacon 239–40).

Conversion

Even as usurers, resident aliens, and Christians of all denominations in early modern England were variously stigmatized as judaizers, the issue of conversion continued to vex the question of Jewish identity. Despite the fervent belief held by many Christians that the Jews were destined to join Christendom and herald the Second Coming of Christ, Jewish converts to Christianity were treated as suspect. In his study of Jewish converts in thirteenth-century England, the historian Robert Stacey has shown that by this time "there was clearly an irreducible element to Jewish identity in the eyes of many Christians, which no amount of baptismal water could entirely eradicate." In undergoing baptism, "converts from Judaism became Christians, but this did not mean that they had entirely ceased to be Jews in the eyes of their brothers and sisters in Christ" (Stacey 278).

This is borne out in the records of the medieval English Jews who sought refuge in the *Domus Conversorum*, a hospice established in 1232 for the maintenance of converts *de judaica pravitate* ("from Jewish depravity"). The reluctance of the Crown to provide adequate funding for the maintenance of these converts, and the wholesale absence of charitable bequests from individual benefactors for the same, suggest that there was limited public confidence in the efficacy of converting Jews in medieval England. The suspect status of converts was reinforced by the concomitant reluctance on the part of medieval state and ecclesiastical institutions to fully erase the memory of their former Jewish identities: although Jewish converts were no longer required to wear the tabula-shaped badge that had previously identified them externally as Jews, at their baptisms they were given surnames like *le convers* ("the convert") to signal their status as convert – and potentially current – Jews.

Suspicion of the insincerity of Jewish converts gradually developed into the belief that Jews were simply incapable of effectively embracing Christianity. Central to this was the notion of the Jewish body as constitutionally different, such that rejection of Christianity and the failure of baptism were the result not of Jewish perfidy but of tainted Jewish blood and biology. On the Iberian Peninsula, the status of Jewish converts was interrogated with infamous ferocity. Spain was full of *cristianos nuevos* ("New Christians") or *conversos* ("converts") following waves of mass conversions, both voluntary and forced, during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Suspicions about the sincerity of these converts, now able to enjoy the freedoms and opportunities afforded Christians, led to the so-called *limpieza de sangre* ("cleanness of blood") laws, which excluded persons tainted by Jewish descent from positions of honor and public office.

Fears that converts might backslide and return to the faith of their former coreligionists, coupled with the desire to create a homogenous Christian nation in Spain, led to the expulsion of the Jews in 1492. Faced with the grim prospect of conversion or exile, many Jews chose to take baptism, which in turn only deepened suspicions about the status of converts and the need to root out secret Jews. The Spanish Inquisition, established by papal bull in 1478 to maintain Catholic purity and to root out heretics, took up the charge of ousting crypto-Jews or *marranos* (a derogatory term alluding to "pork"). Events in Portugal shortly after only intensified the problem when, following an edict of expulsion in 1497, Jews in Lisbon expecting ships bound for exile were confronted instead with monks and baptismal fonts. From that moment on, all Jews in Portugal were considered Christians and, following the Spanish example, an Inquisition was established to root out crypto-Jews.

However, "rather than stamping out crypto-Judaism," the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions "unexpectedly created and exported a new problem: the fear that some Christians were not really Christians," in the process revealing the disturbing reality that "faith was disguisable, religious identity a role one could assume or discard if one had sufficient improvisational skill" (Shapiro 17). As a result, Spanish and Portuguese exiles were commonly

suspected of being crypto-Jews. English authors routinely conflated Iberian national identities, such that the interchangeable terms *Spaniard*, *Portugall*, and *Portingale* became synonymous with *marrano* and crypto-Judaism. For example, John Florio's English-Italian dictionary defined the word *marrano* as "a Iew, an Infidell, a renegado, [and] a nickname for a Spaniard" (Florio 216). The English were also well aware of the events on the Iberian Peninsula and their disastrous aftermath, evidenced by the crude jokes that were told mocking the Spanish and Portuguese as "discended of the fart of a Iew" (Copley sig. T1r), simultaneously maligning the Iberian nations as Jewish and mocking their obsession with lineage and blood purity as hypocrisy. Other jokes made light of the grim fate of those crypto-Jews caught by the Inquisitions and burned as heretics at an *auto-da-fé*, jesting that converts are unafraid to wade through any amount of water – baptismal or otherwise – to avoid the flames (Copley sig. O3r).

Diasporas

The vast majority of convert and covert Jews left Spain and Portugal for the relative toleration of the Ottoman Empire, where they were free to openly practice their old faith and where some rose to powerful state and administrative positions. Other Iberian crypto-Jews established communities (or joined existing Jewish ones) in Italy, and later the Netherlands, Germany, and France. The location dictated whether it was prudent for crypto-Jews to maintain the outward appearance of devout Protestant or Catholic exiles, or, as in the case of Venice and the Ottoman Empire, if it was safe to profess their Judaism openly. In England, small communities of crypto-Jews were established in London and Bristol, where they passed as Catholics under Mary and then as Protestant exiles after her death.

In addition to reiterating the legend of the Wandering Jew, an important consequence of the diasporas initiated by the expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula was the development of mercantile networks, mediated by Jews and crypto-Jews, which cut across and linked all of the rival seaborne Protestant, Catholic, and Islamic empires. As with usury, international trade became closely aligned with the Jews in the early modern English imagination. Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* begins with Barabas "*in his Counting-house, with heapes of gold before him*," boasting about his vast riches and exotic goods accumulated through trade with nations from the far-flung corners of the known world: Persians, "men of *Vze*," the Spanish, Greeks, Arabians, Moors, Indians, and Egyptians (Marlowe sig. B1v–B2r). The association between Jews and merchants explains the confusion behind Portia's question, "Which is the merchant here and which the Jew?" (*MV* 4.1.170), as well as ongoing critical confusion over the precise identity

of the titular character – the merchant Antonio or the usurer Shylock – since the play was entered in the Stationers' Register as "*the Merchaunt of Venyce, or otherwise called the Jewe of Venyce*" on July 22, 1598.

Inalienable Jewishness

By the early modern period, "Jewishness" was clearly a category of difference founded on more than theological distinctions, and events elsewhere in Europe contributed to the belief that the Jews were constitutionally unable to shed their Jewish identities through conversion. For a time, Martin Luther had been sympathetic toward the Jews as natural allies against the idolatrous practices of a corrupt Catholic Church. When the Jews failed to embrace the purified version of Christianity offered by the Reformation, Luther railed against them, rehearsing the litany of traditional anti-Semitic charges with renewed vigor. Since he believed that their diabolical nature rendered them physically and spiritually incapable of conversion, Luther called for the Jews to be burned to death in their synagogues. Although they did not call for synagogues to be razed, English authors were similarly uneasy about the ambivalent status of Jewish converts. In his sermon celebrating the baptism of a Jew in 1578, John Foxe preached the millenarian belief that "all nations, as well Iewes" will be "vnited together in one sheepefold" under Christ, while naturalizing Jewish obstinacy and "infidelitie" as an "inheritable disease … from their mothers wombe, naturally caried through peruerse frowardnes, into all malitious hatred, & contempt of Christ, & his Christians" (Foxe, *Sermon* sig. A1v, B3r).

There are no Jewish conversions represented as unambiguously sincere and effective in the extant English plays of the period. The efficacy of the conversion of Jonathas and his brethren in the late medieval *Play of the Sacrament* is conveniently untested when they are expelled from their new Christian community at the close of the play. Marlowe's representation of Abigail as "False, credulous, inconstant" (Marlowe sig. F3v) in her feigned initial conversion to gain access to her father's gold and her later parroted professions of faith, and in Barabas's empty promises to be baptized, clearly question the sincerity and efficacy of Jewish conversion in *The Jew of Malta*. So, too, in *The Merchant of Venice*, where references to Jessica as an "infidel" (*MV* 3.2.217) and "stranger" (*MV* 3.2.236) and to Shylock as "the rich Jew" (*MV* 5.1.292) after both of their purported conversions suggest that their Jewishness has not been entirely effaced by baptism.

A more strikingly overt example of Jewish converts retaining their essential Jewish identity postconversion comes from Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turn'd Turke*, in which the character of Benwash – a Jewish merchant who has converted to Islam to safeguard his wife against the predations of the Tunisian Turks – is never once

referred to by other characters as a Muslim or a Turk but is instead consistently identified as a Jew. This indelible Jewish identity is evident not only in the performances of these plays but also in the printed texts. The earliest extant text of *The Jew of Malta*, the 1633 Quarto, prints the prefixes "*Iew.*" and "*Bar.*" at different points of the play to indicate Barabas's speech. The 1600 Quarto and 1623 Folio texts of *The Merchant of Venice* are analogous cases, variously printing "*Shy.*" or "*Shyl.*" and "*Iew.*" or "*Iewe.*" to indicate Shylock's parts. Benwash's speeches in the 1612 Quarto of *A Christian Turn'd Turke*, however, are consistently marked with the prefix "*Iew.*"

In Shakespeare's England, where a single generation saw the official faith change back and forth between Catholicism and various forms of Protestantism, conversion was not simply a matter of individual concern and topical interest but of life and death. The figure of the Jew – fixed and unchanging, unaffected by conversion, expulsion, or migration – projected the popular desire for stability in religious and national identity during a time of uncertainty. As illustrated by the events in Spain and Portugal and the emergence of similar sentiments elsewhere in Europe, this was a period that saw the hardening of racial categories and the birth of modern, biologically inflected, racism. Anti-Semitic narratives promoting the notion that the Jewish body was different now imparted a sense of permanence not previously emphasized. Jews were no longer simply members of a misguided faith but a race apart, whose bodies were radically different and resistant to conversion.

Positive interest in Judaism

The seed of Christian doubts about the efficacy of baptism and the sincerity of Jewish converts planted in the Middle Ages, nurtured in part by the rise of nationalism and a concomitant hardening of racial and ethnic categories on the one hand and the attendant crises of identity of the various Reformations on the other, bore bitter fruit by the early modern period. Even so, it is all too easy to lose sight of the positive interest in Jews, Judaism, and Jewish culture in England and elsewhere in Europe during this period – interests that would eventually lead to the de facto readmission of the Jews to England in the 1650s.

Christians eager to convert the Jews, whether by compelling them to attend sermons or to participate in public disputations, quickly realized that their cause was greatly hindered by a lack of proficiency in Hebrew and unfamiliarity with Hebrew Scripture and Jewish hermeneutics. This proselytizing urge, combined with an increasing scholarly recognition of the importance of Hebrew Scripture and exegesis for the understanding of Christianity itself, led to the 1312 decree of the Council of Vienne establishing lectureships in Hebrew and

other Oriental languages at five universities, including Oxford, with posts at other universities shortly to follow. Knowledge of Hebrew had always been central to the humanist task of translating the Bible into the vernacular, taken up with renewed vigor after the Reformation, and the emphasis on the literal interpretation of scripture championed by Lutherans and other Protestant groups privileged the knowledge of *hebraica veritas* ("Hebrew truth"). The introduction of the printing press and the use of Hebrew type allowed Christian Hebraists across Europe to disseminate and engage directly with the body of Jewish biblical scholarship and commentary now accessible to them.

The "Great Matter" of Henry VIII stimulated interest in Hebrew studies in England when the king hoped to employ Hebrew scholarship to secure his divorce from Catherine of Aragon. According to the Old Testament, the union between a man and his brother's wife is categorically forbidden (Lev. 18.16) and elsewhere expressly prescribed as necessary to continue the family line (Deut. 25.5). With the help of Francesco Zorzi, a Venetian friar and Christian Hebraist, Henry VIII sought the opinion of the Italian rabbis in the hope that it might support his case. Unfortunately for the monarch, rabbinical opinion was against him and "worst of all, at this very period a levirate marriage took place in Bologna between a Jew and his brother's widow," which "completely discredited all arguments on the other side, and the breach between England and Rome was brought nearer" (Roth 146). English Protestantism, nationalism, and Hebrew studies developed concurrently in the period that followed, where proficiency in the language – culminating in the monumental publication of the King James Bible in 1611 – was frequently linked with anti-Catholic, pro-English rhetoric. Hebrew and other Oriental languages were also privileged in many of the occult philosophical systems that developed during the Renaissance. For figures such as Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, familiarity with esoteric Hebrew mystical literature – particularly the texts associated with the Kabbalah – was integral to the pursuit of *prisca theologia*, the theory that universal Christian truth was to be found in and confirmed by the religions of antiquity. Hebrew was believed to be the language of angels and demons, and by the seventeenth century proficiency in the language was considered essential for practitioners of natural philosophy, alchemy, and other occult sciences. All of the most famous (and infamous) European occultists of the age – Johannes Reuchlin, Johannes Trithemius, Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, John Dee, Giordano Bruno, Robert Fludd, Athanasius Kircher, and Francis Mercury von Helmont – adapted and synthesized the literature and exegetical techniques of the Kabbalah in their own works of natural philosophy.

Not all medieval and early modern representations of Jews were pejorative. At the same time as Jews were

depicted as monstrous aliens and murderers of Christian children, neutral and even positive images were produced. Old Testament Jews in particular were frequently interpreted typologically as prefiguring Christ – whom, unlike contemporary Jews, they did not have the opportunity to reject – and other New Testament personalities. Tudor and Stuart monarchs promoted comparison to Old Testament kings – Henry VIII to David, Edward VI to Josiah and Solomon, Elizabeth I to Esther, and James I to David and Solomon – in order to reinforce the notion of rule by divine right and to garner praise and adoration by association with these mythic king-figures of wisdom, learning, and peace. With the notable exception of Cain – and in contrast to Herod, Judas, and the "Christ-killers" of the New Testament – when episodes from the Old Testament were dramatized in medieval mystery cycles and early modern biblical plays, the Jews were portrayed as positive models or neutral (but relatable) figures.

The Reformation and the emergence of various Protestant groups stimulated renewed interest in millenarian ideas concerning the discovery of the twelve lost tribes of Israel and their subsequent reunion and general conversion to Christianity. These ideas took a particular hold in England, where some believed that the 1290 expulsion of English Jews had served only to hinder conversion efforts and the prophesied reunion of the "scatter'd Nation" (Marlowe sig. B3r), further delaying Christ's Second Coming. These hopeful ideas, coupled with an emerging Protestant national identity and the belief that England was an elect nation, were encapsulated in references to England as the "New Israel." As God's new chosen nation, England had defeated the Spanish Armada in 1588, and seventeenth-century commentators stressed the providential role that England was still to play in apocalyptic history by readmitting – and converting – the Jews.

"Which [is] the Jew?"

For Shakespeare's original audiences, there were many competing and contradictory answers to Portia's question, "which [is] the Jew?" (*MV* 4.1.170). Anti-Semitic narratives inherited from the medieval past or developed in response to contemporary events at home and abroad held that Jews were a monstrous race of usurers, poisoners, cannibals, and criminals who crucified Christian children and used Christian blood for ritual purposes, threatening church and state in league with the devil, Muslims, pagans and other heretics, and later the pope. More positive attitudes toward the Jews, arising out of philosemitic interest in Hebrew and Jewish biblical scholarship, millenarian expectations, international trade, or typological comparison to Old Testament figures, were simultaneously pervasive in early modern

England. These positive and negative associations rendered "Jewishness" a flexible label in Shakespeare's England, a symbolically potent, fluid, and composite identity construct projected onto oneself and others to suit changing social, cultural, theological, national, and political agendas, with serious consequences for all Jews, real and imagined.

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93. WITCHCRAFT

Sarah Kennedy

BY THE TIME SHAKESPEARE CREATED his three weird sisters for *Macbeth* about 1606 (see Figure 144), the witchcraft hysteria in Europe had already waxed and waned a number of times. England's spectacular and melodramatic trials had only recently begun, as England before Elizabeth I had been relatively free of this particular cultural plague. The playwright would have had a wealth of information by the turn of the century from pamphlets and other popular accounts of trials from Italy to Scotland. Sadly, after the death of William Shakespeare, the seventeenth century was to witness one of the fiercest and bloodiest periods in this dismal chapter of European history, and many of these later trials would be held in England.

144. Macbeth and the Witches, Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (London: 1577). By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

One of the earliest witch trials in Europe was held, surprisingly, at the far margin of the continent, in Kilkenny, Ireland, in 1324. Church and civic leaders in Ireland, for the most part, showed little interest in witches throughout the early modern period, but Alice Kyteler was tried after her husband, having found "flying ointment" and some bread that resembled communion wafers in her cupboard, accused her of trying to murder him through sorcery. The well-to-do Alice, after a protracted legal battle, fled to London, but her maid, Petronilla de Midea, was convicted and executed somewhere in the vicinity of Kilkenny.

WITCH-HUNTS: THE FIRST PHASE

The Kyteler trial, though well publicized (its site remains a tourist draw in Kilkenny), did not initiate a series of accusations. The witch-hunts of the early modern period begin, for all practical purposes, with Pope Innocent VIII's *Summis Desiderantes*, or, as it is commonly known, the "Witch-bull," of 1484. The intellectual ground had been laid by Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) in *The Summa Contra Gentiles*; in this long philosophical inquiry, Aquinas systematized thought about the nature of evil as part of a larger ontological structure and provided logic for its force in the human world.

Before Aquinas, attention to witchcraft had been intermittent and unsystematic. Pope Alexander had, in 1258, published a papal letter that allowed the Inquisition to make arrests for heresy, which might include witchcraft. The Inquisition of Toulouse sometime in the early